

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(1)2200/00-01
(These minutes have been seen
by the Administration and
cleared with the Chairman)

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Legislative Council
Panel on Economic Services

Minutes of meeting held on
Tuesday, 17 July 2001, at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building

- Members present** : Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Kenneth TING Woo-shou, JP
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP
Dr Hon David LI Kwok-po, GBS, JP
Hon Fred LI Wah-ming, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam
Hon SIN Chung-kai
Dr Hon Philip WONG Yu-hong
Hon Howard YOUNG, JP
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP
- Non-Panel member attending** : Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
- Members absent** : Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon HUI Cheung-ching, JP
Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP
Hon Mrs Miriam LAU Kin-ye, JP
Hon CHOY So-yuk
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP
Hon Henry WU King-cheong, BBS

**Public officers
attending**

: Agenda Item III

Economic Services Bureau

Ms Sandra LEE
Secretary for Economic Services

Mr Richard LUK
Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Services

Civil Aviation Department

Mr Albert LAM
Director-General of Civil Aviation

Mr Simon LI
Acting Assistant Director-General of
Civil Aviation (Air Services)

Agenda Item IV

Economic Services Bureau

Ms Sandra LEE
Secretary for Economic Services

Mr Richard LUK
Principal Assistant Secretary for Economic Services

Civil Aviation Department

Mr Albert LAM
Director-General of Civil Aviation

Mr Alex AU
Deputy Director-General of Civil Aviation

Hong Kong Observatory

Dr H K LAM
Director of the Hong Kong Observatory

Dr B Y LEE
Assistant Director of the Hong Kong Observatory
(Aviation Weather Services)

Attendance by invitation : Agenda Item III

Helicopters Hong Kong Ltd.

Mr Andrew TSE
Chief Executive Officer

Ms Clara LAU
Director of Sales & Marketing

Heliservices (HK) Ltd.

Mr John LEIGH
Director

Mr Mark D TURNER
Managing Director

Agenda Item IV

Hong Kong Airport Authority

Dr David J Pang
Chief Executive Officer

Mr Howard ENG
Airport Management Director

Mrs Dora KAY
General Manager (Corporate Development)

Mr Eric WONG
General Manager - Terminal Operations

Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong

Mr YUEN Ka-chai
Chairman

Mr TUNG Yao-chung
Executive Director

**Clerk in attendance : Mr Andy LAU
Chief Assistant Secretary (1)2**

Staff in attendance : Ms Alice AU
Senior Assistant Secretary (1)5

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I Confirmation of minutes and matters arising

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1762/00-01 - Minutes of special meeting held on 9 April 2001;
LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(01) - List of outstanding items for discussion; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(02) - List of follow-up actions)

The minutes of special meeting held on 9 April 2001 were confirmed.

2. Members noted that subsequent to the Panel's discussion on "Mid-stream fee" at the meeting held on 18 June 2001, the Administration had provided an information note to the Panel (issued vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1773/00-01) setting out the follow-up actions it had taken. Members raised no further comments on the paper provided by the Administration.

II Information papers issued since last meeting

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1702/00-01 - Tables and graphs showing the import and retail prices of major oil products from June 1999 to May 2001;
LC Paper No. CB(1)1760/00-01 - Retail/wholesale prices of major fuels; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1788/00-01 - The Hongkong Electric Company Limited - Commissioning of the first 300MW Gas Combined Cycle Unit (L9) at the Lamma Extension in 2004)

3. Members noted the above information papers issued since last meeting.

III Development of the helicopter industry in Hong Kong

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1519/00-01 - Submission provided by the Helicopters Hong Kong Ltd.; and
LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(03) - Information paper provided by the Administration)

4. The Director-General of Civil Aviation (DG of CA) introduced the Administration's paper on the subject (LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(03)), which set out the current operation of helicopter services in Hong Kong and on the measures taken by the Government and the Airport Authority to facilitate their

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development.

5. The Secretary for Economic Services (SES) advised that the Government recognized that there was potential for further development of the helicopter industry in Hong Kong. However, the pace of development would depend on cost-effectiveness and the provision of ancillary facilities, such as additional heliport sites and other supporting facilities such as customs, immigration and quarantine (CIQ) arrangements.

6. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr John LEIGH, Director of Heliservices (HK) Ltd. (Heliservices), highlighted the major issues relating to the development of the helicopter industry in Hong Kong in respect of the provision of more heliport facilities, enhanced air services agreement with the Mainland to include non-scheduled helicopter services between Hong Kong and other parts of the Pearl River Delta Region, and the need to ensure reciprocity on payment so that a level playing field was provided for Hong Kong operators to compete with their Mainland counterparts. A submission provided by Heliservices was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1809/00-01(02).

7. Mr Andrew TSE, Chief Executive Officer of Helicopters Hong Kong Ltd. (HHKL), presented the key points of HHKL's proposal to restructure the existing Heliport Rental Agreement (Rental Agreement) between the company and the Government Property Agency (GPA) for the use of the Helipad and ancillary facilities (Helipad) at the Hong Kong and Macau Ferry Terminal (HKMFT). HHKL considered that the complicated three-tier rental structure should be replaced by a more equitable arrangement under which a fixed fee would be charged per flight. Moreover, the rental structure should allow the lessee to be compensated for making capital improvements to the heliport facilities. A further submission provided by HHKL was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1809/00-01(01).

Rental of Helipad at HKMFT

8. SES referred members to Table 2 of Attachment 1 to LC Paper No. CB(1) 1763/00-01(03) for the statistics on helicopter services between Hong Kong and Macau. She said that HHKL had been operating well for the past few years and the average annual growth rate of passengers was 20.3% from 1996 to 2000. In 2000, there were 17 436 flights and 94 228 passengers were recorded, representing an increase of 6.5% and 29.8% respectively over 1999. On the other hand, the rent paid by HHKL in 2000 for the use of Helipad at HKMFT was about \$4 million. Considering HHKL's revenue from the growing business, she remarked that such a level of rent should not pose too much of a problem for HHKL.

9. Mr Howard YOUNG however queried whether the heliport rental of \$50 per passenger was too high as the facilities at the Helipad at HKMFT were rather

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limited. Notwithstanding HHKL's performance, he pointed out that the Government should not simply consider the issue from the affordability point of view. Instead, the Administration should ensure that the helicopter industry could be further developed to facilitate Hong Kong's tourism industry. Sharing this view, Mr Kenneth TING opined that the matter should not be simply be left to the decision of GPA. The Chairman requested that a written response be provided to members after the meeting about the justifications for imposing a heliport rental of \$50 per passenger. SES undertook to relay members' views to the relevant Government department.

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10. In response to Ms Audrey EU's enquiry, Mr Andrew TSE said that if a lower rent was charged by the Government, the benefits would be passed on to the passengers directly as the ticket price would be reduced.

Provision of additional heliport facilities

11. Referring to Mr John LEIGH's earlier statement that there were 11 potentially suitable heliport sites in Hong Kong, the Chairman sought clarification from the Administration as to why only two sites were identified by the Planning Department during the site search in 2000. In response, DG of CA explained that the Administration had already looked into the sites proposed by the two companies, but considered that not all of them were practical. Various factors such as the provision of CIQ arrangements and the impact on nearby developments would also have to be taken into account. Hence, the Civil Aviation Department (CAD) had commissioned a consultancy study in April 2001 to examine the requirement of additional helicopter facilities in urban areas. Detailed study would be carried out on all potential sites including the outer pier of HKMFT and the former Kai Tak Airport (which was covered by the South East Kowloon Development Study). Views of the industry would also be consulted. The study was expected to be completed in October 2001.

12. Referring to the two potential sites identified by the Government, Mr CHAN Kam-lam considered that together with the spare capacity at the existing Helipad at HKMFT, it might be adequate to meet the demand of future passenger growth. He was concerned about the possibility of over-provision of heliport services in Hong Kong and sought the two companies' assessment on future growth potential of the industry. He said that given the noise impact of helicopter operation, it might not be feasible or practical to provide too many sites in urban areas.

13. In response, Mr Andrew TSE explained that services between Hong Kong and Macau ran at 30-minute interval and the average load factor was about 50%. However, the Helipad at HKMFT essentially served as a runway for take-off/landing and no parking space was available. Under the circumstances, it would be quite difficult to increase the frequency of flights. If helicopter services were to be expanded to serve the Pearl River Delta Region, additional heliport services were essential. He added that the Helipad at HKMFT could be enhanced

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to meet short-term needs and HHKL was prepared to finance the necessary cost provided that such investment could be amortized through mutually agreeable rent rebates over a reasonable period of time. In this respect, SES said that HHKL had already submitted its proposal to the Government for consideration.

14. Ms Audrey EU enquired about the reasons why the load factor could not be increased further. In response, Mr Andrew TSE highlighted the operational difficulties faced by the company. He said that flights sometimes would have to be cancelled due to unstable weather conditions. Moreover, under the existing law, HHKL was not allowed to advertise its chartered flights service. Both Ms EU and Mr SIN Chung-kai enquired about the rationale for imposing such a restriction. Mr SIN considered that except for safety considerations, helicopter services operators should not be restricted from advertising their services.

15. In reply, DG of CA explained that the operation of non-scheduled services, i.e. chartered flights, was to supplement scheduled services. Such applications would only be approved in case of excessive demand which could not be met by the corresponding scheduled services. Under the circumstances, if non-scheduled flights were also allowed to advertise, it would not be fair to those airlines which operated the scheduled services. SES added that such prohibition was also meant to protect consumer interests. She informed members that there had been cases where applications to operate chartered flights were rejected because the operators had failed to meet the requisite safety requirements. If the operators could advertise and accept payment for the chartered flight before their applications were approved, the interest of the passengers might not be adequately safeguarded. Noting members' concerns, SES agreed that the Administration would conduct an internal review to see whether better administrative arrangements could be put in place.

16. Addressing Mr CHAN Kam-lam's concern on noise impact caused by the operation of helicopter services, Mr John LEIGH said that the factor had already been taken into account when the 11 potential sites were identified. He assured members that instead of seeking to proliferate heliport sites in Hong Kong, the industry was looking for one or two comprehensive sites that would allow multiple take-offs/landings and multiple parking to meet future demand.

Development of cross-boundary helicopter services

17. Mr Howard YOUNG expressed appreciation about the Government's effort to commission a consultancy study to study the issues involved in the development of Hong Kong's helicopter industry. He considered that as Hong Kong was an international city, the Administration should adopt a forward-looking approach for promoting the helicopter industry in Hong Kong so that it could provide a supplementary transport link to the Pearl River Delta. In this connection, he asked whether issues related to the negotiation of air services agreement and provision of supporting facilities would be included in CAD's study. The Chairman also

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enquired about the assistance to be rendered by the Government in terms of facilitating the development of cross-boundary helicopter services.

18. Mr Kenneth TING considered that the Administration should take on a more active role in the negotiation of air services agreement and route rights with the Mainland authorities. In order to maintain Hong Kong's role as an international and regional centre of aviation, he said that it would be most important that a fast and efficient cross-boundary helicopter service was available to link Hong Kong with other nearby cities in the Mainland. In this connection, he requested that the matter be discussed at the Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation Joint Conference.

19. SES replied that the Administration had already started initial discussion with the relevant Mainland authorities regarding a number of issues, including the need to expand the current air services arrangement between the Mainland and Hong Kong to cover helicopter services, as well as related fees and charges. She stated that the Administration was aware of the concerns raised by the industry and they would be discussed during formal negotiations between Hong Kong and the Mainland authorities. SES further pointed out that the development of helicopter services between Hong Kong and other parts of the Pearl River Delta would very much depend on how many helicopter landing/take-off points with suitable CIQ facilities that were readily available in the Mainland. DG of CA confirmed that matters relating to air services agreements etc. were not covered by the consultancy study.

20. Mr YOUNG was concerned that if CIQ facilities were to be provided at all such points, substantial cost would be incurred. He thus urged the Administration to take into account relevant overseas experience and explore whether innovative measures could be adopted to streamline cross-boundary control formalities. The Chairman considered that the scope of the on-going consultancy study was rather limited and more issues were involved regarding the development of Hong Kong's helicopter industry in this area of service. DG of CA took note of the members' views and suggestions.

21. Members agreed that the Panel would follow up on the matter after CAD had completed its consultancy study in October 2001.

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IV Operation of the airport during and after typhoon Utor

- (LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(04) - Letter from Hon Emily LAU to the Chairman of the Airport Authority dated 9 July 2001;
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(05) - Letter from Hon Fred LI to the Chairman of the Panel dated 10 July 2001; and
- LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(06) - Information paper provided by the Airport Authority)

22. The Chairman said that grave concerns had been expressed by both the public and Members about the operation of Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) during and after typhoon Utor. The Panel thus decided to hold urgent discussion on the matter. Apart from the Administration, representatives of the Airport Authority (AA) and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) had also been invited to attend the present meeting. He then drew members' attention to the letters from Miss Emily LAU and Mr Fred LI (issued vide LC Paper Nos. CB(1)1763/00-01(04) and (05) respectively) expressing their concerns about the incident. The formal replies from AA on specific questions raised by the two members were at Attachments 5 and 7 of the information paper provided by AA (LC Paper No. CB(1)1763/00-01(06)).

23. The Chief Executive Officer of AA (CEO/AA) expressed sincere apologies for the inconvenience caused to the passengers. But he stressed that safety was AA's primary consideration and top priority at all times and under all circumstances. He reported that no major incidents had happened during and after typhoon Utor. There was only one minor incident in which the lateral movement of an aircraft under strong wind conditions caused it to collide with the aerobridge resulting in minor damage to the fuselage. The incident would be further investigated by AA.

24. With the aid of overhead projector, CEO/AA gave members an account of the operation of HKIA during the period 5 to 7 July 2001 when typhoon Utor struck Hong Kong, and the measures taken to ensure the safety of air traffic and passengers and alleviate the inconvenience caused. A table showing the wind condition and aircraft movement during and after typhoon Utor was tabled at the meeting and subsequently issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(1)1809/00-01(03).

25. On the way forward, CEO/AA said that a series of debriefing meetings had been held within AA, and between AA and other concerned parties, such as the Civil Aviation Department (CAD), airlines and ramp handlers, with a view to identifying areas for improvement to the airport operation procedures. Matters to be looked into would include the allocation of aircraft parking stands, provision of supporting equipment (e.g. equipment for towing of aircraft), staff deployment, circumstances under which flights should be cancelled, information to passengers and the public etc. In addition, AA was working with airlines and other airport-

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based organizations to further enhance communication and co-ordination during typhoons and emergencies.

26. Mr YUEN Ka-chai, Chairman of TIC (Chairman/TIC) conveyed the industry's concern about the importance of providing the travelling public with timely and accurate information about their flights under such emergencies. He said that as passengers would direct their complaints to the airlines, it would be most important for AA to ensure that enhanced communication was maintained among AA, Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) and airlines so that updated weather and flight information could be provided to passengers as soon as possible. Moreover, airline counters should be adequately manned by suitably senior staff to deal with enquiries from passengers.

27. Mr CHAN Kam-lam criticized AA for its complacency in crisis management and lack of immediate response to a very serious situation. He opined that more should have been done by AA, both in terms of early planning and co-ordination, as well as clearing the backlog of passengers stranded in the terminal building. In this connection, he suggested that AA should establish a formal mechanism with the airlines in respect of the latter's responsibility to take care of the delayed passengers. Mr CHAN hoped that AA could accept his criticisms and be more vigilant in the future. Moreover, he considered that better public relations efforts were required so that the public was aware of the efforts made and work done by AA.

28. Denouncing the confusion and chaos at HKIA as shameful to Hong Kong, Miss Emily LAU also criticized AA for failing to perform its statutory duty of operating the airport to achieve the objective of maintaining Hong Kong's status as a centre of international and regional aviation. She opined that during such crisis, it was AA's responsibility to assume a pivotal co-ordinating role to work closely and liaise with the airlines and all other partners at the airport. AA's failure to do was a clear sign of dereliction of duty. Further, she was disappointed that AA had not learnt a lesson from the opening of HKIA and queried about the role and degree of involvement of AA's senior management during the operation of the HKIA Airport Emergency Centre (AEC).

29. CEO/AA replied that the AEC was activated for more than 54 hours from 1930 hours on Thursday 5 July until 0145 hours on Sunday 8 July. AA, CAD - Air Traffic Control, airlines and ground service company senior management were present and directed operations throughout the incident. CEO/AA said that although he did not stay at the airport at all times, he was at the airport on Thursday, Friday and Saturday (i.e. 5 to 7 July) to supervise the work of AEC and monitor the situation at the terminal building, as well as giving support to his colleagues who were required to stay on-duty for long hours.

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Communication of information

30. Miss Emily LAU referred to the serious lack of information for the waiting passengers. In response, CEO/AA acknowledged that it was unreasonable and unacceptable for passengers to wait for such long hours without knowing when their flights could take-off. However, he said that normally, weather information would be provided by HKO to the pilots directly without having to go through AA. On the night of 6 July, aircraft which were ready to take-off were waiting for an opportunity of winds easing off temporarily so as to depart immediately. Indeed, there was a break between 2000 and 2030 hours, allowing six flights to take-off.

31. Mr Fred LI expressed serious concern about the pilots' decision to "take a chance" and wait for a window of lighter winds to occur, thus keeping the 48 aerobridge-served stands fully occupied. As a result, arrival aircraft could not deplane their passengers while some departing aircraft loaded with passengers could not take-off. In both cases, the passengers were forced to stay on the aircraft for long hours. He sought AA's responsibility in ensuring that the aerobridge-served stands were efficiently utilized.

32. CEO/AA explained that due to the strong wind conditions, it was not safe for arrival aircraft to deplane their passengers at the remote stands. In fact, the wind was so strong that it was not even safe to open the aircraft doors. Hence, the pilots decided that the doors should not be opened and they would wait for the first available aerobridge-served stands to deplane their passengers safely. He assured members that AA had worked very hard to ensure that the 48 frontal gates were utilized to the fullest extent. More than 20 aircraft which were not in a position for boarding/alighting had been moved to the remote parking area of the airport. However, given the severe weather conditions, this was no easy task. Acknowledging that the situation was not satisfactory, he said that AA would look into every detail for improvement.

33. CEO/AA further said that once the aircraft door was closed, the pilot would communicate directly with the air traffic control tower. Weather forecast information from HKO would also go directly to the pilot who would then decide whether it was safe to take-off. In the absence of such information, it would not be appropriate for AA to override the pilot's decision. In addition, it was the pilot who had total accountability to the passengers for their safety.

34. In response to the Chairman, the Director of HKO (D of HKO) advised that forecasts of winds of 56 km/h (30 knots) or more, with squally showers and heavy rain, were issued for the airport from 1900 hours onwards until midnight on 6 July 2001. At 2000 hours, the warning was subsequently extended to 0200 hours in the following day. He added that real-time meteorological information were disseminated to air traffic services units for onward transmission to aircraft pilots, airline operators and various offices of AA through the Aviation Meteorological Information Dissemination System.

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35. Mr LI was unconvinced by AA's explanation. He considered that under the circumstances, AA should have the authority to override the pilot's decision to wait for take-off. Concurring with this view, the Chairman said that AA should at least have the authority to order the pilot to move away so that arrival aircraft could deplane the passengers. He asked whether improvements could be made by AA in this regard so that similar incidents would not recur. Mr Philip WONG opined that if the pilots had been warned about the persistently bad weather, individual pilots should take the responsibility for their decisions which had in this case kept many passengers waiting unnecessarily on the aircraft.

36. DG of CA explained that when preparing for take-off, the pilot would rely on the aerodrome observations transmitted via the air traffic control tower. While those information were accurately provided by HKO, the present problem with typhoon Utor was largely due to the strong winds which affected the airport after landfall and the pilots' anticipation that the winds would ease off temporarily to allow take-off. From their past experience, the pilots knew that it was not uncommon for such "windows" of lighter winds to occur in between rain cells as the winds were associated with the heavy rain. Hence, they were not taking chances when they decided to wait at the frontal gate for the opportunity to depart immediately. Moreover, as the ability of different types of aircraft to withstand strong winds varied, the pilot would be in the best position to decide whether the aircraft was ready to take-off under certain conditions. He assured members that the pilots' decision was in line with international practice in this regard.

37. CEO/AA also said that the passengers' priority would be for the aircraft to take-off as soon as possible and the airlines would make a judgement from that perspective. If any aircraft was not allowed to leave Hong Kong, that would not be very satisfactory either. Chairman of TIC however pointed out that there were some 12 000 passengers stranded in the terminal building overnight. Even when these "breaks" in weather did occur, there would be no way such a huge backlog of passengers would be cleared within a short time. Hence, AA should work out a sequence of flight departures with the airlines so that they could make early arrangements to release the passengers.

38. Both the Chairman and Mr SIN Chung-kai expressed concern about the arrangement for according priority to individual aircraft for take-off. Miss Emily LAU also asked whether communication was maintained with all airlines so that they were informed accordingly. In response, CEO/AA stressed that AA already had a procedure for arranging flight departures, taking into account the readiness of the aircraft and the crew. At the peak, there were some 17 000 passengers in the terminal building and about 5 000 passengers were either accommodated in hotels or sent back home.

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Weather forecasting services

39. The Chairman observed that the wind had actually become stronger after the Tropical Cyclone Signal No. 8 was replaced by Signal No. 3. As a result, aircraft movement at HKIA was seriously disrupted after 1900 hours on 6 July and even brought to a standstill between 2200 hours on 6 July to 0300 hours on 7 July. He questioned why HKO had failed to provide a more accurate forecast about this rather unusual situation.

40. Referring to negative feedback from some airlines, Mr Howard YOUNG expressed grave concerns about the quality of weather forecasting services provided by HKO. He said that as such information was critical for the pilot's decision on the spot as to whether and when the aircraft should take-off, HKO should review whether its services in this area were up to international standard.

41. With the aid of a chart showing the track of typhoon Utor, D of HKO explained the movement of typhoon Utor and the associated weather conditions across Hong Kong during the period 5 to 6 July. During the night of 6 July, Utor was well inland about 200 km away from Hong Kong bringing along with it the gale force wind belts near its centre. The No. 8 signal, which was based on wind conditions in the Victoria Harbour, was replaced by No. 3 as winds in the Victoria Harbour moderated. Nevertheless, Utor's intense outer rainbands affected the western part of the territory, including HKIA. Localized squalls associated with those rainbands brought winds of over 56 km/h (30 knots) to the airport. Turbulence, windshear and microbursts were also detected. These conditions at the airport were well forecasted by the HKO in its aerodrome forecasts issued for that period. Winds at the airport began to gradually moderate after daybreak on 7 July. D of HKO added that typhoon Utor was unusual in that it took more than 40 hours after landfall before it completely dissipated, breaking the record of 30 hours set by typhoon Hope in 1979. He further added that the HKO used the most advanced equipment and forecasting technology to provide weather forecasting services which were comparable to those provided by other advanced international centres.

General improvements

42. Mr SIN Chung-kai suggested that there might be simple ways to address the emotions felt by the waiting passengers, such as the provision of some televisions at the terminal building. Miss Emily LAU was concerned about the improvements to be made in addressing the basic needs of the waiting passengers. In reply, CEO/AA highlighted the proposed improvement measures as outlined in paragraph 16 of the paper. He said that AA was aware of the inadequacies in the present case and would work with all relevant parties to ensure that better arrangements were made in future.

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43. Mr Howard YOUNG referred to the lack of extended Airport Express services to clear the stranded passengers and pointed out that better co-ordination was required. In this respect, CEO/AA reported that Airport Express service was slightly extended to 0100 hours on Saturday, 7 July. The railway corporation could not extend railway service beyond that time as necessary track maintenance work was suspended the night before due to the hoisting of No. 8 typhoon signal and thus would have to be carried out in Saturday morning. CEO/AA added that airport bus services and taxis were available.

Way forward

44. Miss Emily LAU opined that the Board of Directors of AA should hold an urgent meeting to review the whole incident so that such chaos and confusion would not happen again. Moreover, she requested the Secretary for Economic Services to take the lead in reviewing the whole incident and to co-ordinate efforts from all parties concerned to make all necessary improvements. In response, CEO/AA advised that the AA Board of Directors would convene a meeting to discuss the matter on 26 July 2001.

Admin. 45. Summing up the discussion, the Chairman invited the Administration and AA to consider the views and suggestions raised by members at the meeting so that further improvements could be made in handling such emergencies. In this connection, the Administration should revert back to the Panel in October when the new legislative session commenced.

V Any other business

46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 1:20 pm.